

Lithuanians To Consider Laws Freeze

Landsbergis Replies To Kohl, Mitterrand

By Andrew Katell
Associated Press

MOSCOW, May 2—Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis said today that his government would consider suspending some independence enabling laws that drove the Soviet Union to impose an economic embargo on the break-away Baltic republic two weeks ago.

Landsbergis announced the step in a letter to the leaders of France and West Germany, who last week proposed such a compromise to help start negotiations between the Lithuania and Moscow.

"Everything is negotiable that does not question the matter of restored independence of the Lithuanian state on March 11, 1990," Landsbergis said in his letter to French President Francois Mitterrand and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

The letter was read to Lithuania's legislature, the Supreme Council, which gave its approval without a vote, said Aidas Palubinskas, a spokesman for the council.

"Putting our confidence in France and the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as in other Western democracies and in their support of Lithuanian democracy, we are asking you to transmit to the Soviet authorities our consent to consider



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A clerk waits on shoppers at a grocery in Vilnius as food rationing begins.

a temporary suspension of the effects of the decisions taken by the sovereign parliament of the Lithuanian Republic that could trouble the Soviet authorities," Landsbergis wrote.

The idea behind the proposal from France and West Germany was that if Lithuania temporarily suspended those laws, the Soviet Union, in return, might ease its pressure on the republic and also agree to talks on its independence.

Palubinskas stressed that the proposal from Kohl and Mitterrand did not ask for rescinding of the declaration of independence but urged the suspension of laws passed to implement the declaration.

Soviet officials have welcomed the French-German proposal, contained in letters to Landsbergis and Gorbachev. Gorbachev's spokesman, Arkady Maslenikov, told reporters in Moscow on Saturday that the letter "is not far from the line that the Soviet leadership has been pursuing."

Lithuania declared independence

in an attempt to restore the freedom it enjoyed before 1940, when the Soviet Union forcibly annexed it along with Latvia and Estonia. It has since passed laws designed to back the independence drive, including ending conscription of Lithuanians into the Soviet army, issuing identity cards for non-Lithuanians and seizing Communist Party property.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has declared the independence declaration invalid and rejected negotiations with Lithuania, saying such talks are reserved for foreign countries, and demanded that the independence laws be rescinded.

Gorbachev imposed a partial economic embargo, cutting supplies of fuel and other commodities to Lithuania. As of Wednesday night, no resumption of any of the fuel supplies had been reported.

The republic of 3.7 million people has been struggling economically ever since the embargo was imposed. At least 10,000 people have been thrown out of work due to factory closings, Palubinskas said, with the number expected to rise to 35,000 by the end of the week.

Latvians Unveil Transition Plan

Associated Press

RIGA, U.S.S.R., May 2—The Latvian Popular Front unveiled an independence plan today that it hopes will bring the Baltic republic eventual freedom from the Soviet Union without incurring Moscow's ire.

Leaders of the mass nationalist organization told a news conference that they believe they have enough votes to get the draft measure passed in a session of Latvia's legislature scheduled to begin Thursday.

The plan would declare independence as a gesture, with actual independence occurring only after an unspecified transition period that front leaders estimated could last several years. Estonia passed a similar measure March 30.

Front legislators said they agreed to the measure after watching neighboring Lithuania declare independence March 11 and then struggle unsuccessfully to persuade Moscow to accept its secession.